**Passage 1**

Outside, the rain continued to run down the

screened windows of Mrs. Sennett's little Cape Cod

cottage. The long weeds and grass that composed the

front yard dripped against the blurred background of

5 the bay, where the water was almost the color of the

grass. Mrs. Sennett's five charges were vigorously

playing house in the dining room. (In the wintertime,

Mrs. Sennett was housekeeper for a Mr. Curley, in

Boston, and during the summers the Curley children

10 boarded with her on the Cape.)

My expression must have changed."Are those

children making too much noise?" Mrs. Sennett

demanded, a sort of wave going over her that might

mark the beginning of her getting up out of her chair. I

15 shook my head no, and gave her a little push on the

shoulder to keep her seated.Mrs. Sennett was almost

stone-deaf and had been for a long time, but she could

read lips. You could talk to her without making any

sound yourself, if you wanted to, and she more than

20 kept up her side of the conversation in a loud, rusty

voice that dropped weirdly every now and then into a

whisper. She adored talking.

To look at Mrs. Sennett made me think of eighteenth century England and its literary figures. Her hair

25 must have been sadly thin, because she always wore,

indoors and out, either a hat or a sort of turban, and

sometimes she wore botH. The rims of her eyes were

dark; she looked very ill.

Mrs. Sennett and I continued talking. She said she

30 really didn't think she'd stay with the children another

winter. Their father wanted her to, but it was too much

for her. She wanted to stay right here in the cottage.

The afternoon was getting along, and I finally left

because I knew that at four o'clock Mrs. Sennett's "sit

35 down" was over and she started to get supper. At six

o'clock, from my nearby cottage, I saw Theresa coming

through the rain with a shawl over her head.She was

bringing me a six-inch-square piece of spic ecake, still

hot from the oven and kept warm between two soup

40 plates.

A few days later I learned from the twins, who

brought over gifts of firewood and blackberries, that

their father was coming the next morning, bringing

their aunt and her husband and their cousin. Mrs.

45 Sennett had promised to take them all on a picnic at the

pond some pleasant day.

On the fourth day of their visit, Xavier arrived

with a note. It was from Mrs. Sennett, written in blue

ink, in a large, serene, ornamented hand, on linen-finish

50 paper:

. . . Tomorrow is the last day Mr. Curley has and

the Children all wanted the Picnic so much. The Men

can walk to the Pond but it is too far for the Children. I

see your Friend has a car and I hate to ask this but

55 could you possibly drive us to the Pond tomorrow

morning? . . .

Very sincerely yours,

Carmen Sennett

After the picnic, Mrs. Sennett's presents to me

60 were numberless. It was almost time for the children to

go back to school in South Boston. Mrs. Sennett

insisted that she was not going; their father was coming

down again to get them and she was just going to stay.

He would have to get another housekeeper. She said

65 this over and over to me, loudly, and her turbans and

kerchiefs grew more and more distrait.

One evening, Mary came to call on me and we sat

on an old table in the back yard to watch the sunset.

"Papa came today," she said, "and we've got to go

70 back day after tomorrow."

"Is Mrs. Sennett going to stay here?"

"She said at supper she was. She said this time she

really was, because she'd said that last year and came

back, but now she means it."

75 I said, "Oh dear," scarcely knowing which side I

was on.

"It was awful at supper. I cried and cried."

"Did Theresa cry?"

"Oh, we all cried.Papa cried, too. We always do."

80 "But don't you think Mrs. Sennett needs a rest?"

"Yes, but I think she'll come, though.Papa told

her he'd cry every single night at supper if she didn't,

and then we all did."

The next day I heard that Mrs. Sennett was going

back with them just to "help settle." She came over the

85 following morning to say goodbye, supported by all

five children. She was wearing her traveling hat of

black satin and black straw, with sequins. High and

somber, above her ravaged face, it had quite a Spanish-

grandee air.

90 "This isn't really goodbye," she said."I'll be back

as soon as I get these bad, noisy children off my

hands."

But the children hung on to her skirt and tugged at

her sleeves, shaking their heads frantically, silently

95 saying, "No! No! No!" to her with their puckered-up

mouths.

Following are some ACT sample questions on this passage:

1. **According to the narrator, Mrs. Sennett wears a hat because she:**
   1. is often outside.
   2. wants to look like a literary figure.
   3. has thin hair.
   4. has unique taste in clothing.
2. **Considering the events of the entire passage, it is most reasonable to infer that Mrs. Sennett calls the children bad (line 92) because she:**
   1. is bothered by the noise they are making.
   2. doesn't like them hanging on her skirt.
   3. doesn't want to reveal her affection for them.
   4. is angry that they never do what she tells them.
3. **Considering how Mrs. Sennett is portrayed in the passage, it is most reasonable to infer that the word ravaged, as it is used in line 89, most nearly means that her face reveals:**
   1. irritation and annoyance.
   2. resentfulness and anger.
   3. age and fatigue.
   4. enthusiasm and excitement.
4. **What is the main insight suggested by the conversation in lines 69--83?**
   1. The Curley family cries to manipulate Mrs. Sennett into doing what they want.
   2. The narrator regrets that she is not going to Boston and is a little jealous of Mrs. Sennett.
   3. Mrs. Sennett is happy to leave the Curley family because they are always whining and crying.
   4. Mrs. Sennett intends to return to the Cape soon because she has discovered that they have been manipulating and taking advantage of her.
5. **Which of the following does the passage suggest is the result of Mrs. Sennett's loss of hearing?**
   1. She is often frustrated and short-tempered.
   2. She can lip-read.
   3. She dislikes conversation.
   4. She is a shy and lonely woman.
6. **Given the evidence provided throughout the passage, the children probably silently mouth the word "no" (lines 94--97) because:**
   1. Mrs. Sennett has just called them bad, noisy children, and they are defending themselves.
   2. they do not want to leave the Cape before the summer is over and are protesting.
   3. they are letting the narrator know that Mrs. Sennett is thinking about returning to the Cape.
   4. they are continuing their battle against Mrs. Sennett's intention to return to the Cape.
7. **It is reasonable to infer from the passage that Mrs. Sennett asked "Are those children making too much noise?" (lines 11--12) because Mrs. Sennett:**
   1. concerns herself about the well-being of others.
   2. wishes to change the subject to literary figures.
   3. cannot supervise the children without the narrator.
   4. is bothered by the noise the children make.
8. **The details and events in the passage suggest that the friendship between the narrator and Mrs. Sennett would most accurately be described as:**
   1. stimulating, marked by a shared love of eccentric adventures.
   2. indifferent, marked by occasional insensitivity to the needs of the other.
   3. considerate, notable for the friends' exchange of favors.
   4. emotional, based on the friends' long commitment to share their burdens with one another.
9. **As it is used in line 3, the word composed most nearly means:**
   1. contented.
   2. unexcited.
   3. satisfied.
   4. constituted.
10. **At what point does Mr. Curley cry at the supper table?**
    1. Before Mary and the narrator sit and watch the sunset
    2. Before Mrs. Sennett tells the narrator she doubts she will stay another winter with the children
    3. Before the children spend a rainy afternoon playing house in the dining room
    4. After the narrator learns that Mrs. Sennett will return to Boston